

WO-357

1884

North Beach Lifesaving Station
Assateague Island (site)
Public

The North Beach Lifesaving station was one of four coastal facilities erected along Maryland's seashore during the fourth quarter of the of the nineteenth century. Although the Ocean City building is the only one to survive the other three locations are significant historical and archeological sites. North Beach station stood until the March 1962 storm severely damaged the building, and it was burned shortly afterwards. Built in 1884, the story-and-a-half frame station was much like the 1891 Ocean City station with its king-post stick decorated eaves.

Not much has been written on the activities that surrounded the North Beach station and the small island village. The 1877 Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas locates Birches saltworkes at the site along with the residence of M. Birch and School No. 6. The lifesaving station was erected seven years following the publication of the atlas.

The lifesaving service keepers of the North Beach station were Adelbert Soper (1893-1898), John A. J. Hudson (1890-1909), William B. S. Powell (1910-1911), and William I. Purnell (1912-1914).

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: NORTH BEACH LIFESAVING STATION

MHT Inventory Number: WO-357

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

ARCHITECTURE

TRANSPORTATION

2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

INDUSTRIAL/URBAN DOMINANCE

4) Resource Type(s):

(1870-1930)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. W0-357

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic NORTH BEACH LIFESAVING STATION

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Assateague Island ☐ not for publication

city, town Ocean City ☒ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Worcester

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name United States Department of Natural Resources

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Worcester County Courthouse folio

city, town Snow Hill state MD 21863

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☒ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The North Beach Lifesaving station formerly stood in the center of Maryland's section of the Assateague National Seashore in the vicinity of Great and Little Egging Beaches. During the second half of the nineteenth century the coastal village of North Beach included a few residences, a saltworks, School No. 6, and the lifesaving station that was erected in 1884. According to local history the building was severely damaged in the March 1962 storm, and afterwards the structure was burned. The site remains of archeological and historical interest.

The former station was similar to the extant Ocean City station erected in 1891. The story-and-a-half frame structure was erected with its gable-front facing east and the ocean, and the principal gable roof was oriented on an east/west axis. Rising from the front portion of the roof was a gable roofed watch tower.

The east (main) elevation was built with a large garage bay door on the first floor and a pair of sash windows lighted the second floor. Extended eaves, supported on stick brackets contained a large king-post style truss. A smaller king-post stick truss was repeated in the eave of watch tower as well.

The south side of the building was partially covered by a shed roof addition as well as a single story rear wing that extended on a perpendicular axis from the back of the station. The gable roof of the station was dominated by a large center dormer and a smaller adjacent dormer, both of which interrupted the eave. Each dormer was embellished with a king-post stick decorated eave. Rising through the west gable end was a brick chimney stack.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1884 Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The North Beach Lifesaving station was one of four ¹⁸⁸⁴ coastal facilities erected along Maryland's Atlantic seashore during the ~~1884~~ quarter of the nineteenth century. Although the Ocean City building is the only one to survive the other three locations are significant historical and archeological sites. North Beach station stood until the March 1962 storm damaged the structure, and it was burned shortly thereafter. Built in 1884, the story-and-a-half frame station was much like the 1891 Ocean City station with its king-post decorated eaves.

Not much has been written on the activities that surrounded the North Beach station and the small island village. The 1877 Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson atlas locates Birches saltworks at the site along with the residence of M. Birch and School No. 6. The lifesaving station was erected seven years after the publication of the atlas in 1884.

The lifesaving service keepers of the North Beach station were Adelbert Soper (1893-1898), John A. J. Hudson (1890-1909), William B. S. Powell (1910-1911), and William I. Purnell (1912-1914).

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart Architectural Historian

organization Worcester County date 4/1/90

street & number Worcester County Courthouse telephone 301-632-1194

city or town Snow Hill state MD 21863

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
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